

Teen Programs

Youth Spotlight: Patricia Riggs

The Final Test

Smirking confidently and awaiting my next challenge...

I stand in an eerie landscape, surrounded by craggy rocks and mist and stars. The jagged floor of the slope cuts into the tender flesh of my feet and warms my soles with blood. The mist envelops me like a child's warm blanket and the stars dance in front of my eyes like couples at a fair. I find myself lost...

The stars grow brighter as if my presence excites them and they seem to grow larger as if coming closer...crowding me into an infinitely tiny space and leaving me no where to run. Closer and closer they come, blocking out the darkness, chasing away my last refuge. The shadows were the only place I could have hidden...

It is so cold...my hair is stiff with half-formed icicles. The once welcome mist now coalesces into a thick fog, obscuring my sight from anything beyond arm's length. The fog is frigid and bitter. It frightens me. It seems to wrap its evanescent fingers around my throat, threatening to choke me, I breath it in and it seems to solidify in my lungs bearing me down and drowning me with its vapor.

The silence...the undeniable silence weighs upon my shoulders like a tangible burden. It deafens me. The endless quiet rings in my ears and, like a microphone, my ears begin to whine at the sound repeating itself over and over again in my head, threatening to crush my sanity with its forceful resonance.

Like a little lost child, I begin to wail. I scream out my sorrow and my pain and my loss and my hunger until I find myself out of breath. I breathe in the sickening mass of coagulating air and expel it out of my body in an intense burst of song. I defy the silence with my voice carrying with it my passionate cries for help. My tune holds no words, yet proves cataclysmic to the stillness of the air and the miasma begins to dissipate. Yet, as my echoes weaken and crumble all that is left is the ragged sound of my breathing and my shriek fades away like so much noise.

The stars begin to burn in fury and obsession. They swirl around me like tiny motes of light, yet each speck holds the power of a mighty sun over a thousand fold of my own. They begin to drift from the heavens like wondrous snowflakes of wrath all ablaze. I cower in fear of their outrage, and hold my head between my knees as they burn into my being and strike into my very core, forever tattooing the likeness of pain upon my bruised body.

My vision spins as I fall to my hands and knees, and my palms and legs scrape upon the broken ground. I open my eyes streaming with tears of pain and loss, and focus slowly upon the revolving floor. I pause and all seems clear for a brief moment that lasts forever. I stare at the ground, covered with shards of glass... the last remnants of my shattered heart and torn soul...

I clutch bits and pieces of my frayed and exhausted reserves of hope in my white-knuckled fists. Hot tears course down my cheeks and mix with my blood. The red trails of grief burn tracks down my face and slowly drip down to the dust and disappear. The earth and glass lie devastated by the events ensuing my arrival. My soul alights and I once again find the strength...the desperation...to fight back again.

I delve into myself, into the recesses of my mind so long unexplored. All my hidden secrets...all my deprived and forgotten memories, lay bare before my mind's eye. I find within me blankness...nothingness where I flee torment time and again. I reach for this void and into it I pour my all my leagues of agony and despair. It all vanishes into the emptiness within me...and yet in accepting this escape, I become it...and I become the abyss. As I fight my way out of myself all loses significance, all time, sense, and meaning is annulled. I become void.

As I break the surface of my own serenity time itself falls into my hands. A long thread of nine different spectrums and five of the dimensions begins to unravel. I use it as an anchor to pull me away from the nothingness. As time takes shape in my mind...so do more things... memories resurface first...then feelings...then emotions...and finally my consciousness and my sense of self. I have fought my way through the ravages of my own tortured mind. I had born myself into nothing and raised my head anew.

I have passed the final test...and I have won against myself.